



# ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION. K-12

MARCH 2008

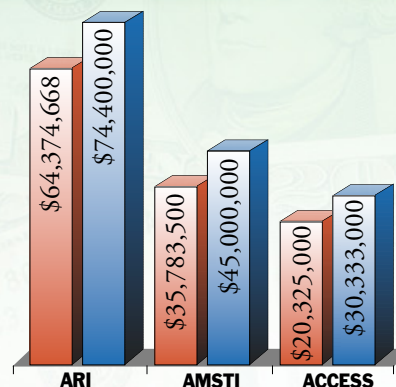
## PIVOTAL LEGISLATIVE SESSION FOR ALABAMA EDUCATION

Approximately 743,000 students attend Alabama's public schools and nearly 50,000 teachers are helping those students learn and earn a high school diploma.

**ALABAMA LAWMAKERS** have until May 19th to determine the fate of significant K-12 education programs in the state as they consider the proposed education budget.

Will the legislature approve the Governor's proposed budget for Alabama's public schools and keep intact the programs that have brought national attention? Will the legislature approve a budget that will continue to propel Alabama to the top of the education

*continued on next page ...*



The 2009 budget proposal that Gov. Bob Riley presented to the legislature includes increased funding for the Alabama Reading Initiative(ARI), Alabama Math. Science, Technology Initiative(AMSTI) and ACCESS Distance Learning.

2008 FUNDING  
2009 PROPOSED FUNDING



ladder – a place Alabama has never been before? **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. JOE MORTON** said continuing educational progress means keeping the programs that work in place to not only sustain, but propel, education in Alabama.

“We have never been in the position that we are in today – being an emerging leader in the nation in education. If we do not sustain those programs that got us to this point we will drop back to the bottom. I am going to work as hard as I can to make sure that does not happen,” Morton said.

Morton recently appeared on numerous television programs to answer questions about the pivotal legislative session and its impact on the 2009 education budget.

“When you talk about taking away money from what is already a poorly-funded state for education, any cut hurts. If you look at how we compare to other states it is a pretty true statement that we are in the bottom 15 in per pupil expenditures (according to the 2008 Quality Counts Report),” said Morton.

The Quality Counts Report is an annual report card of K-12 public education in all 50 states. In the 2008 Quality Counts report by Education Week, Alabama was given a grade of C for the amount of funding going toward K-12 education in the state. Alabama also received an overall grade of C for all six major indicators in the report.

“What that says is Alabama funds its schools at a C level and gets C results. Out of that funding, I guess you could say we get what we pay for. If we funded it a little better we might get better results,” Morton said.

The 2009 budget proposal that **GOV. BOB RILEY** presented to the legislature includes increased funding for the three primary programs that have been set as benchmarks for instructional improvement – the Alabama Reading Initiative(ARI), Alabama Math, Science, Technology Initiative (AMSTI) and ACCESS Distance Learning.

“The Governor has made a strong stand to preserve and increase funding for the programs that change children’s lives. AMSTI, ACCESS and ARI are all programs that have put Alabama on the national map as an educational leader,” Morton said. “It took ARI 10 years to get fully funded. People now recognize it as the national leader in how to reform reading in elementary schools. It would be catastrophic to lose that momentum.”

The governor’s proposed funding for the three benchmark programs are slightly lower than the proposal from the State Board of Education, but still includes an increase from 2008.

The governor’s proposal keeps two other important programs level with 2008 appropriations – graduation coaches and school nurses.

“This budget proposal presented by the governor protects the primary focus of

what K-12 education has been centered on and that’s doing those things that improve the opportunities for kids to learn in the classroom,” said **ASSISTANT STATE SUPERINTENDENT FOR FINANCE CRAIG POUNCEY**.

Overall, the governor’s proposed 2009 budget for K-12 is \$6.3 billion and is slightly down from the 2008 budget of \$6.7 billion. The 2009 K-12 proposed budget is \$137 million less than the 2008 budget.

“We will have to dip into the ‘rainy day’ account for \$430 million to allow us to meet the obligations that are already in the 2008 budget,” said Pouncey.

Some of the programs that did not make it into the governor’s budget proposal include a new initiative that would have allowed the hiring of 390 new teachers for middle schools and a proposal that would have guaranteed a principal in every school regardless of school size.

Three areas that are proposed to receive less funding in 2009 than in 2008 include transportation, the At-Risk student program and technology coordinators.

“I think we have to commend the governor on his recommendation because he recognized K-12 does not have the luxury of raising tuition or supplementing the loss of state funds like higher education or post secondary. His proposal is not cutting the classroom at the same rate that he is cutting everything else,” said Pouncey. 🟡

**“We have never been in the position that we are in today – being an emerging leader in the nation in education. If we do not sustain those programs that got us to this point, we will drop back to the bottom. I am going to work as hard as I can to make sure that does not happen.”**

**– State Superintendent of Education Dr. Joe Morton**







Gov. Bob Riley discusses AP classes with students Alfred Hamilton, Byrne Norman and Shelby White, students from Loveless Academic Magnet Program (LAMP) in Montgomery.

## ALABAMA ADVANCES IN ADVANCED PLACEMENT® RANKS

*Proportion of Alabama Public School Students Succeeding on AP Exams Reaches All-Time High*

**THE COLLEGE BOARD** 4th Annual AP Report to the Nation shows Alabama's AP growth is outpacing the nation in participation and high scores.

- Alabama's African American students posted the biggest gains – more than doubling national percent increases on participation and high scores.
- Alabama has eliminated achievement gaps in participation and scores among Hispanic students.
- 11.4 percent of Alabama's class of 2007 took at least one AP exam.
- Percentage of Alabama 12th graders earning a score of 3 or higher (3+) has increased steadily since 2000.
- Over half of AP exams taken received 3+ score (5 is highest grade).

"Advanced Placement participation and scores are on the rise in Alabama's public schools. Alabama is extremely proud to be awarded a National Math and Science Initiative [NMSI] grant to strengthen AP programs. State support through the Alabama Advanced Placement Initiative also increased to 2.6 million dollars in the 2007-08 school year," said **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. JOE MORTON**.

The National Governors Association, as part of Honors State Grant Program, provided funds to test strategies to prepare more AP teachers, expand course offerings and increase student preparation for and success in AP courses as a means to raise standards for all students. The grant is in its final year and, according to project director Carol Crawford, is providing a foundation for future AP expansion in Alabama.

Alabama is one of only seven states awarded a NMSI (funded by

ExxonMobil Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Michael and Susan Dell Foundation) grant, administered by A+ College Ready. At \$13.2 million over six years, this is the largest private grant on record to the state's K-12 public education.

Gov. Bob Riley, Dr. Morton, and A+ College Ready staff announced the first 12 schools – eight Jefferson County and four Montgomery County – to participate in the AP training and incentive grant.

"Expanding AP programs is critical to providing a world-class education for our children and making sure they are prepared to succeed in today's global economy. We're developing a prototype here. The AP program you design here can be exported through ACCESS to every high school in Alabama, and become a state and national model," challenged Gov. Riley. ●



**Advanced Placement participation and scores are on the rise in Alabama's public schools.**

### "Why take AP?"

Gov. Riley recently asked a group of AP students why they chose to take the advanced placement classes.

*"I want more AP math courses. I plan to major in forensic science in college."*

– Cody Ellis, 10th grade, Lee High School, Montgomery

*"It's a good chance to make better grades on AP exams and get into a better college."*

– Shawn Kelley, 10th grade, Brewbaker Technology Magnet, Montgomery

*"I chose AP because I needed something more challenging."*

– Ally Mills, 12th grade, Booker T. Washington Magnet, Montgomery

*"I want more AP English and biology."*

– Raven Eldridge, 11th grade, Brewbaker Technology Magnet, Montgomery, plans to major in biology.

*"We accept your challenge, Governor, and will do our best to represent our schools and our state."*

– Alfred Hamilton, 10th grade, Loveless Academic Magnet Program, Montgomery



# MARCH IS ARTS EDUCATION MONTH IN ALABAMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE SCHOOLS ARE ALIVE WITH THE SOUNDS AND SIGHTS OF THE ARTS.

*"All children are artists; the only problem is how to remain one when you grow up." – Pablo Picasso*

## BALDWIN COUNTY

- Artist Ricky Trione demonstrates techniques with students.



## SHELBY COUNTY

- Chelsea Intermediate fourth-grader Claire Wilson shows off her limestone rock painting during workshop led by folk artist She-She and sponsored by Shelby County Fine Arts Council with Vulcan Materials grant.



## SHELBY COUNTY

- Dress-Like-an-Artist Day at Inverness Elementary.



## BALDWIN COUNTY

- Einstein recreated by Lynda Williams' student Cleveland Mosher; one of Fairhope High School art students who created ceiling tiles for chemistry lab.



## GUNTERVILLE CITY

- Dress rehearsal for Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*: Kristen Parsley (Belle), Carolyn Griffith (Wardrobe) and Samantha Moudy (Mrs. Potts).



## ELMORE COUNTY

- Stanhope Elmore High School 11th-grader Robert May plays piano donated by Elmore County's Play It Forward program.



## ARTS EXHIBIT SHOWCASES STUDENT ARTISTS AND TEACHERS

**THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT'S VISUAL ARTS EXHIBIT** is an annual event which honors K-12 student artists and their teachers. This year's exhibit was held February 11-22 in the Old Supreme Court Library in the State Capitol and was sponsored by the Alabama Department of Education, BlueCross and BlueShield of Alabama, Alabama Alliance for Education in the Arts, Alabama Institute for Arts Education and Alabama Arts License Tag Grant. The exhibit featured artwork from over 400 K-12 students statewide.

State Superintendent of Education Dr. Joe Morton and Sara Wright, Academic Innovations Coordinator, display the Visual Arts Exhibit's "Best of Show" by artist Michael Bridges, Alabama School of Fine Arts (teacher: Darius Hill).





## Q&A with Alabama's New Leader of Reading

### THE ALABAMA READING INITIATIVE

(ARI) has a new leader who faces new challenges. Soon after **DR. KATHERINE MITCHELL**, former ARI Director, retired in December, **SHERRILL PARRIS** was named the new Assistant State Superintendent of Education responsible for ARI and the Alabama Reading First Initiative (ARFI). We sat down with Parris for a one-on-one interview to ask questions about her new role, where ARI and ARFI are headed with looming budget cuts and what Parris derived from United States Department of Education Secretary **MARGARET SPELLINGS'** recent visit to Montgomery.

### Q: How did you arrive at the Alabama Department of Education and how long have you been with the department?

*A: I began work at the Alabama Department of Education (SDE) in July 1999. I served on the steering committee of the Alabama Reading Panel in 1997 and 1998, and was principal of one of the first 16 ARI schools (1998-1999). Dr. Mitchell hired me to work with her as soon as the work was assured of legislative funding and expansion was imminent.*

### Q: What is the most important thing you are working on right now?

*A: The potential for great long-term impact lies in our focus on district leadership for literacy. Closely correlated is our SDE commitment to assuring high levels of learning for every student. Gone are the days when it was acceptable and standard practice for teachers to document that they had "covered" the standards in the courses of study or "finished" the textbook. The commitment now is the successful mastery of those standards by every student.*

### Q: What do you see as your greatest challenges ahead?

*A: Maintaining level funding in lean budget years is a huge challenge. Increasing the budget to provide for badly-needed training and support for Grades 4-12, without sacrificing K-3 support, is critical.*

### Q: What did you derive from Secretary Spellings' recent visit?

*A: It was clear that Secretary Spellings sees Alabama as a leader in the national literacy effort. She solicited comments and guidance from the statewide leaders assembled at that forum, and seemed to genuinely consider the feedback. I think her decision to visit here is evidence of the very high regard in which she holds Dr. Morton, Gov. Riley, and Alabama's literacy efforts.*

### Q: Spellings spoke of the Reading First Initiative (federally-funded reading initiative) budget cuts on a national level and how dollars for Alabama will be cut – how will this impact what we are doing here in Alabama?

*A: This huge cut in the Reading First funding to Alabama will have a significant impact, but will not be as negative in Alabama as in other states. In most states, the federal funding for Reading First is the only funding provided for a literacy initiative.*

*teachers, etc. Effective in July 2008, Alabama's Reading First funding will be right at \$7 million, rather than the current \$18 million. It is critical that we not have a simultaneous decrease in state funding to support those schools.*

### Q: Speak about the differences between ARI and ARFI.

*A: ARI is a state-funded reading program for K-3 schools while ARFI is federal funds. ARFI funds are limited to K-3 and provide supplemental services to ARI for schools that face the greatest challenges. ARI was initially a whole school reform effort. State-funded expansion was limited to Grades K-3 upon Gov. Riley's commitment to fully fund the literacy focus in the early grades. Statewide training called Alabama Reading Academy began in 2004 and targeted teachers and administrators of K-3 schools. So, currently, very little of the \$64 million provides support to secondary schools or higher grades in elementary grades. No new schools beyond third grade have been added in recent years except for the 14 Alabama Reading Initiative-Project Adolescent Literacy (ARI-PAL) schools – and those 14 schools and districts provided all the funding for that literacy effort. SDE provides the support. ARI's first 16 schools were trained in the*

**"ARI HAS EXPERIENCED GREAT SUCCESS – NOT ONLY IN INITIAL TRAINING, BUT IN ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT."**

→ **SHERRILL PARRIS, ASSISTANT STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION FOR READING**

*Alabama's state funding was already established prior to Reading First, and the federal funding just provides supplemental support in schools which are simultaneously supported by state funds. So in Alabama, for example, every K-3 school has state funding for a reading coach. In those schools facing the greatest challenges (poverty, minority populations, etc.), federal funding has provided additional support such as scientifically based reading programs, intensive professional development, sometimes additional coaches and/or intervention*

*summer of 1998, made possible through funding generated by private businesses and organizations. Subsequently, state funding was appropriated by the State Legislature, beginning with \$6 million and increasing through the years to the current \$64 million to support 900 schools (794 of which are K-3).*

### Q: When do you hope to have ARI-PAL implemented in all schools in Alabama? What's the timeline?

*A: With full funding, at least all schools with Grades 4-8 can be included by 2012, and the*

*continued on page 7*

## Alabama Teachers Named Presidential Award Finalists

THE PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) is the highest recognition bestowed on K-12 mathematics



Rebecca Darby

Ashley Allen

Jennifer Reed-Taunton

and science teachers for outstanding teaching in the United States. Alabama's finalists are:

- Mathematics Finalist – **REBECCA DARBY**, Central High School, Lauderdale County Schools
- Science Finalists – **ASHLEY ALLEN**, Oneonta High School, Oneonta City Schools, and **JENNIFER REED-TAUNTON**, Alabama Avenue Middle School, Albertville City Schools

In addition to honoring individual achievement, the goal of the PAEMST award program is to exemplify the highest standards of mathematics and science teaching. Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities, and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science education. Each finalist receives the National Science Foundation (NSF) Certificate of Honor in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Finalists also were recognized by the State Board of Education and at an awards luncheon in February.

"These awards are among the nation's highest honors for math and science teachers. The caliber of our classroom teachers and their dedication to their students brings honor to their profession and to Alabama's public schools," said **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION DR. JOE MORTON**.

Enacted by Congress in 1983 and administered by NSF on behalf of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the PAEMST program identifies eligible K-12 teachers in the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, schools of the Department of Defense Education Activity and U.S. territories.

For more information, [CLICK HERE](#), e-mail **CAROLYN TOWNSEND** or call 334-353-5440.

## Shelby County Students Experience Teen Driving Program

SHELBY COUNTY MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS are coming face to face with the reality of what can happen when you don't practice safe driving habits. The students are participating in a four-day "Teen Safe Driving Program" designed to make students think about their decisions when behind the wheel or while being a passenger.

The program is a collaborative effort between Shelby County Department of Community Services and Shelby County Schools. The idea was developed by a 2006 Leadership Shelby County class project that focused on railroad crossings throughout the county and the fact that too many young lives were being lost in tragic traffic accidents.

The program includes a video produced by broadcasting and journalism students from Oak Mountain High School. The video features parents who have lost children in traffic accidents along with county officials involved in delivering services to families and teens.

**COUNTY MANAGER ALEX DUDCHOCK** organized the production of a three-vehicle mobile exhibit that travels to each school during the week of the safe driving program. The exhibit features cars that were involved in teen driving accidents. It illustrates accidents that were the result of teens racing or speeding, using alcohol, playing loud music and texting.

Chelsea High School students were so moved by the program they developed a special pledge to honor **HANNAH YEAGER**, a Chelsea student who was killed in a railroad crossing accident in November 2006. Students signed the pledge to not only honor Hannah, but also her mother, **JULIE YEAGER**, who teaches at Chelsea Middle School and is featured on the video. Students promised to:

- Always buckle up and make sure there are enough seat belts for all passengers.
- Maintain posted speed limits.
- Wait until the car is safely parked to text or use other electronic devices.
- Never drive while sleepy or drowsy.
- Refrain from drinking and driving.
- Follow all requirements of the graduated license allowing no more than four occupants in the vehicle.

Shelby County officials will be offering the exhibit and materials to Hoover City Schools and applicable private schools throughout Shelby County. The video will also be given to the State Department of Education to share with other public schools across Alabama.





## Q & A with Alabama's New Leader of Reading (from page 5)

remaining 9-12 grades soon thereafter. Significant expansion would begin during the 2008-2009 school year and the summer of 2009, adding approximately 140 new schools and including over 60 school districts not currently participating in ARI-PAL. We are considering retaining the "ARI-PAL" designation, but with the wording becoming "Alabama Reading Initiative Plan for Adolescent Literacy."

### Q: How many schools can the Alabama Department of Education comfortably handle for training and implementing ARI?

A: Our plan for expanding ARI to eventually provide training for all schools has a key component – SUPPORT for those schools. We are convinced, as experience has shown us, that professional development without follow-up constitutes malpractice. The National Staff Development Standards and Alabama's own Staff Development Standards firmly support that. Rather than hiring significant numbers of regional staff

to support best practices in ARI-PAL schools, we anticipate funding a position at the district level and equipping that individual to participate fully in training and support, much as our current regional staff works.

We also anticipate funding school-level support, similar to the

reading coach funded at each K-3 school (realizing that a full position would not always be needed in 4th grade and above – for example, a school with Grades 3-5 already receives funding for a reading coach through the K-3 support, and wouldn't need two full-time positions with just three grades).

### Q: We have experienced great success with ARI – how will this success change if budget cuts force cutbacks or slowdowns in these successful programs?

A: We have indeed experienced great success

with ARI, only since Gov. Riley and the Legislature assured full funding. This included initial training and ongoing professional development and support – including a school-level coach.

**IN JULY 2008, ALABAMA'S READING FIRST FUNDING WILL BE RIGHT AT \$7 MILLION, RATHER THAN THE CURRENT \$18 MILLION.**

Minimal success was experienced when initial training was provided without funding for ongoing support. Gains during that time were inconsistent and minimal. That experience and a large body of research confirms that initial training alone is not effective. Without an increased budget, ARI will only be able to expand to upper grades in schools and districts which have the capability and commitment to locally fund the training and the support. Fourteen schools currently participate in that way – most will not be able to do so. ●

## Awards, Opportunities and Professional Development

**"Education News Parents Can Use"** The U.S. Department of Education's next broadcast on math education, is scheduled for **Mar. 18**. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

**2nd Annual Reaching At-Promise Students Leaders Institute: "Evolving Leaders: Inspiring Greatness,"** Oct. 22-24, 2008, Manchester Grand Hyatt, San Diego, offers expert hands-on strategies for educational leaders who are focused on addressing the needs of the at-promise population. [Visit conference Web site](#). **EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ENDS Mar. 31**

**The Alabama Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program (ATRIP)** encourages students to take ATRIP into the classroom and become teachers. ATRIP will award more than \$2 million in teaching scholarships. One-hundred high school seniors will be awarded 4-year \$20,000 scholarships, and additional scholarships will be awarded to professionals seeking an alternative degree in teaching. To apply, [CLICK HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Mar. 31**

**2008 American Stars of Teaching.** The U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative is calling for nominations. Parents, students, colleagues, school administrators, and others can nominate exemplary teachers who are improving student achievement, using innovative strategies in the classroom, and making a difference in the lives of their students. [Nominate HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Mar. 31**

**Whit King Prize:** An American Free Enterprise essay contest for students in Grades 6-8. Find entry information [online HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Apr. 4**

**Teaching Ambassador Fellowships** are available for currently practicing K-12 public school teachers at the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) for the 2008-09 school year. Up to 20 Classroom Fellows will remain at their schools under their regular teaching contracts and will be paid to participate in additional USDE discussions and projects throughout the school year on a part-time basis. Up to five Washington Fellows will be chosen as full-time, paid federal employees in Washington, DC for the school year, working on education programs and participating in policy discussions. Fellows will be selected based on their leadership, impact on student achievement and potential for contribution to the field. Highly qualified K-12 public school teachers who have spent at least three years in the classroom are eligible to apply. Applicants must have the full support of their school principals. [Learn more HERE](#). **DEADLINE: Apr. 7**

# U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

## M A R C H

**Arts Education Month • Women's History Month**  
**National Reading Month • Transition Awareness Month**

**March 13 - Alabama State Board of Education Meeting**

**March 23 - Easter Sunday**

**March 27 - Alabama State Board of Education  
Work Session**

## A P R I L

**Child Abuse Prevention Month • Mathematics Education Month**  
**Keep America Beautiful Month**

**April 10 - Alabama State Board of Education Meeting**

**April 13-29 - National Library Week**

**April 24 - Alabama State Board of Education  
Work Session**

**April 28 - Confederate Memorial Day**



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### FEBRUARY BOARD BRIEFS

✎ Resolution in Recognition of Ashley Allen and Jennifer-Reed Taunton, 2007 Science Presidential Award Finalists

✎ Resolution in Recognition of, 2007 Science Presidential Award Finalist

✎ Resolution in Recognition of Rebecca Darby, 2007 Mathematics Presidential Award Finalist

✎ Resolution in Recognition of Pike County Board of Education Transportation Department

✎ Resolution in Recognition of March 2008 as "Arts Education Month" in Alabama Schools

*For a complete list of agenda items, visit the Alabama Department of Education's Web site [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu) under "Board of Ed."*

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